

# Department of Human Services

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WZZM13 ONLINE - ABC TELEVISION for ALL OF WEST MICHIGAN

## Cost of Lisa Holland trial, at least \$18k

John Bumgardner

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Ingham County - Ingham County will pay at least \$18,000 for witnesses who testified in the Lisa Holland trial.

The 33-year-old Williamston woman was convicted last month of felony murder and child abuse in the death of her 7-year-old son Ricky.

The most expensive charge was more than \$7,000 from a child abuse expert.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys say the costs were justified.

Web Editor: [Stanton Tang](#), Executive Producer

Web Editor: [John Bumgardner](#), Assignment Desk



Lisa Holland

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## Child molester sentenced

Tuesday, November 21, 2006

GRAND HAVEN -- A Zeeland Township man who molested an 8-year-old girl at his home and snapped a sexually explicit photo of her was sentenced Monday to three to 15 years in prison. Kevin Roberts, 31, earlier pleaded guilty to second-degree criminal sexual conduct for the late July assault at the Logan Estates mobile home park off Riley Street. Police said Roberts, convicted in 2002 for possessing child pornography, knew the girl through friends and took an inappropriate photo of her on his cell phone camera. As part of a plea deal reached in October, prosecutors dismissed a pornography charge filed in connection with the July assault.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**  
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November 21, 2006

## Sex abuse conviction reviewed

Oakland judge looks at new evidence on Oak Park teacher found guilty of assaulting boys.

**Mike Martindale / The Detroit News**

**PONTIAC** -- New interviews with school workers corroborate that a convicted sex offender was seen in inappropriate situations with boys at an Oak Park elementary school when two boys said they were sexually assaulted, Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca said Monday.

James Perry, a Key Elementary kindergarten teacher, was convicted in September of two sexual assaults of boys in an empty classroom. Perry, 32, has denied any wrongdoing, and Oakland Circuit Judge Denise Langford Morris is reviewing legal filings and transcripts on the request of Perry's attorneys to determine whether a new trial is warranted since there were no eyewitnesses at trial.

That review is expected to take several weeks. Perry faces up to life in prison.

"Defense attorneys have tried to show that without adult corroboration at trial, the jury had nothing more than the boys' version of events," said Gorcyca. "That's really all we need to show and that was sufficient for the jury.

"These new witnesses' statements dovetail to our case and our belief -- and the jury's belief -- that James Perry is a sex offender who belongs behind bars," said Gorcyca. "If there was any evidence that he was innocent, we would do the right thing. But it isn't there."

Earlier this month, defense attorneys produced school staffers, including Clara Geary, who said the incidents in October 2005 could not have occurred in the special education classroom as described by the boys, then 4 and 5 years old, because it was always occupied by other adults.

Perry himself testified he was never alone with any boys at the school or took them to a restroom because that would be inappropriate, Gorcyca said.

But copies of new police interviews of workers obtained by The News reveal:

Gloria Dennis, a Key substitute teacher, knew of occasions when Perry was alone with boys at that school and also with other boys after he was transferred to Roosevelt Middle School.

Kimberly Pugh, a cafeteria worker, observed Perry remove boys from the lunch room and she has walked by the special education room during the lunch hour and noticed it was empty -- contrary to Geary saying it was always occupied.

Pugh says Geary told her she thought Perry was guilty but would not say anything against him because of the children's inconsistent statements. Geary also told Pugh that Perry had taken children to restrooms.

Perhaps more chilling to potential witnesses at Key, Gorcyca said, were instructions by school officials not to talk about Perry. In Pugh's hand-written statement, she said after Perry's arrests: "...Brenda Snow, principal, told her cafeteria staff not to talk with any media reporters, or they would lose their jobs. ..."

Pugh also wrote in early October (2005) that "Perry came in the front cafeteria door he came over to his class in line, he told the teacher's aide he was taking a student. Mr. Perry took the male student by the hand, out the same front door, which leads to the kindergarten special education classrooms."

In a statement dated Nov. 17, 2006, Pugh said she and another worker "were never questioned by the Oak Park authorities regarding any Key cafeteria student information regarding the two students escorted out of the cafeteria by Mr. Perry on two separate occasions in October 2005."

Defense attorney Raymond A. Correll said he had not seen the statements and declined to comment.

"It sounds like more innuendo to me," said Correll. "Even if it does exist it doesn't change what they did or didn't do before the trial."

*You can reach Mike Martindale at (248) 647-7226 or [mmartindale@detnews.com](mailto:mmartindale@detnews.com).*

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The Detroit Free Press

November 20, 2006

Belleville, Ill.

## **Social workers failed kids**

Fifty-three Illinois children died because state child-welfare workers made mistakes or ignored rules from September 1998 to January 2005, according to an investigation by the Belleville News-Democrat.

The deaths involved children being beaten, burned, smothered, shaken and starved, the newspaper reported Sunday.

11/21/2006



Record-Eagle/Douglas Tesner

**Mike and Katrina Schueller play with their sons Connor, 3, and Carter, 10 months, in the living room of their home near Kingsley. The Schuellers will officially adopt Carter today during Adoption Day at the new Robert P. Griffin Hall of Justice on Washington Street in Traverse City. Both boys are from South Korea.**

## Fourth annual Adoption Day is today

BY VICTOR SKINNER

[vskinner@record-eagle.com](mailto:vskinner@record-eagle.com)

TRAVERSE CITY — Thanksgiving week is especially significant for Mike and Katrina Schueller.

The Kingsley couple is adopting their second son in three years today and will have plenty to appreciate come Thanksgiving day.

"We feel truly blessed to have our two boys," Katrina Schueller said. "Adoption is a great way to start your family, add to your family or complete your family."

That's exactly what proponents say Michigan Adoption Day is all about — showcasing the important role adoption can play in the lives of children and families.

The Schuellers formally adopted their first son Connor, 3, at the second Michigan Adoption Day in 2004. Their second son Carter, 10 months, will be one of 26 children whose adoptions will be finalized today at the fourth annual event.

This year's Michigan Adoption Day will be the largest yet for Grand Traverse County and includes both international and domestic adoptions of children ranging from infants to teens, said Family Court Judge David Stowe, who is finalizing the adoptions.

"Adoptions for me as a family court judge is far and away the most enjoyable part of my job," Stowe said. "To be able to finalize this many adoptions in a community this size speaks volumes about the kind of persons that live here that truly care about the well-being of children."

The Schuellers adopted their sons from South Korea through Bethany Christian Services.

"We went several years trying to conceive on our own and had no luck," Katrina Schueller said. "We knew we wanted be parents. We wanted to have kids and ethnicity didn't matter to us."

Stowe hopes stories like the Schuellers' will inspire other families.

"These are loving decisions by adoptive parents that will pay dividends in the future because the kids will grow and develop into positive productive citizens with bright futures," Stowe said. "Spotlighting adoption day might strike a chord with other potential adoptive parents in considering adoption as an option."

The event, co-sponsored by the Michigan Supreme Court and the Grand Traverse-Leenanau Department of Human Services, will take place at 11:45 a.m. on the second floor of the new Robert P. Griffin Hall of Justice on Washington Street.

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Adoption Day celebrated Tues.

By MIKE FORNES

Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - With a theme of "giving thanks for families," The Cheboygan County 53rd Circuit Court and Family Division Judge Robert John Butts will celebrate the 4th Annual Michigan Adoption Day from 9:30 a.m. until noon on Tuesday.

Included in the event, held in conjunction with the Michigan Supreme Court and the Department of Human Services, will be the finalization of the adoption of three local children. Each of the families will be invited to help celebrate after the conclusion of the adoptions.

"We're very excited about this event," said Butts. "In most cases, people are not happy to come to court. Adoptions are one of the exceptions - a joyous occasion for the families and for the court, the Department of Human Services and the service providers involved with the families."

Butts said that adoption is the only answer for children who can never return home because of abuse and neglect, stating that there are many children available for adoption in Michigan, waiting for safe, loving homes.

"In addition, there are many children who have never really known their father or their mother, and a step-parent comes forward and becomes that needed parent," Butts added.

According to Butts, the Cheboygan County Family Court has finalized the adoptions of 18 children for 12 families so far in 2006.

He added that more information will be available at the event for persons interested in adoption. Questions are also welcome at 627-5421 or 627-8876.





## Families become families

Monday, November 20, 2006

**MICHAEL GREENLEE**

### THE SAGINAW NEWS

At this time last year, Janice Reason of Saginaw watched her great-nephews jump for joy when a judge cleared the way for her to adopt them.

Actually, the youngsters did more than jump; they flipped.

"My kids, they can stand in one spot and jump in the air and turn a somersault," said Reason, 38. "So once we were leaving, I gave them the OK. They just started flipping."

Reason could have done acrobatics herself, because she was able to reunite Tony Reason, 13; Deondre Reason, 10; and Nehemiah Reason, 8; under her roof. They attend the Saginaw Preparatory Academy, a charter school in Buena Vista Township.

"Their parents' rights were terminated, and they weren't together," Reason said. "Sometimes when you're in the foster care system, they spread you apart."

Tuesday -- the fourth annual Michigan Adoption Day -- Saginaw County Probate Judge Faye M. Harrison will finalize 13 adoptions for 10 families. The ceremony will take place at the Hart State Office Building, 411 E. Genesee.

Harrison said what is a typical day of work for her could well prove a turning point in a child's life.

"We have 13 scheduled for Tuesday, but we do adoptions all through the year of children that have been in foster care," Harrison said. "For everything we do dealing with child abuse, that's the payoff -- to see a child safe and loved and protected."

Anne Shea, children's foster care and adoption supervisor at Saginaw's Department of Human Services office, said her job isn't confined to just one day, either.

"Adoption is special year-round. We use this one day to bring it forward to the public," Shea said. "There are still children in waiting."

As of last week, 217 Saginaw County children were awaiting adoption, Shea says.

"There's no shortage," Shea said. "There are about 4,000 children available in Michigan with the goal of adoption."

Last year, Saginaw's Department of Human Services office completed 74 adoptions, including the Reasons. However, 159 children became available for adoption during that time, Shea said.

"There's always a need for more families. You never catch up," she said. "Ninety-nine percent of adoptions in this agency are children adopted by family or foster parents."

Toni Prabucki, a Human Services foster care and adoption supervisor for 12 years, said her agency is licensed to complete adoptions only for abused and neglected children who become court wards.

"The Department of Human Services provides services to abused and neglected children who are unable to live in safety with their biological parents," Prabucki said. "Our main focus is to provide them with the most permanency."

Prabucki said permanence is the key, which is why most foster parents are relatives.

For the Michigan adoption day this year, they're pairing with three agencies -- Schwartz Adoption Attorneys and Child Placing Agency Inc. of Saginaw, Adoption Option Inc. of Midland and Catholic Family Services of Saginaw.

Harrison sat down last week to review all of the documentation and sign preliminary papers so that the court can finalize the orders of adoption. She has served as a family court judge for more than 25 years.

Reason said her children brimmed over with positive energy last year as they officially gained a new dimension to their identities.

"It was exciting," she said. "For a long time, they were part of the system. To actually bring closure and say, 'Now you're officially Reasons,' that's exciting." v

Michael Greenlee is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9682.

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# STURGIS JOURNAL

**Print this story**

## Adoption is unique process for grandparents

**Print Page**

By Audora Burg  
Sturgis Journal

Editor's note: This is the second in a three-part series about adoption. On Wednesday, see highlights from Adoption Day and a look at the role foster parenting plays in making kids "adoptable."

When Michael and Jeri Thyng are out with their brood of seven, they often get The Question.

"Are these all your kids?"

Sometimes they give the simple answer.

"The parents are into drugs. We're taking the kids."

Other times they provide a longer, detailed response: yes.

Then they take a breath and start the explanation: after they became grandparents, they found themselves being mom and dad to their grandchildren.

The saga began in 1999 with the birth of the fourth grandchild, Randy.

Randy's older siblings Stephanie, 5, Brandon, 4 1/2, and Kaylee, 20 months old were living in Georgia with their parents Scott and Beth, the Thyngs' son and daughter-in-law.

Then baby Randy was born, and the state of Georgia took temporary custody of him in the hospital. Scott went into hiding with the other three; he asked his parents to come get the children.

"We told them they wouldn't get them back until they (Scott and Beth) straightened out," Jeri said.

A tense 30 days

Michael drove to Georgia, picking up the children in the middle of the night. The next day, Thyngs told the caseworker they had Stephanie, Brandon and Kaylee.

The caseworker said Randy's case would go to court three days later; if the Thyngs were there, the caseworker would hand Randy to them and close the case.

Short-term, the four children were safe; long-term, this efficiency hurt the Thyngs.



The Thyng family mom Jeri, Brandon, Kaylee, Chris, dad Michael, Randy, and Stephanie spend family time one afternoon after school. Michael and Jeri adopted their five grandchildren Sept. 26; today they are adopting the youngest grandchild, Katie (not pictured) during Adoption Day at St. Joseph County Probate Court.

future adoption efforts in Michigan.

They arranged their working lives around the children, so one of them could always be there. Jeri gave up her in-home daycare business to concentrate on the four and worked an evening shift as manager at Dairy Queen. Michael, who is a Michigan State Police trooper, worked third shift at the post in White Pigeon.

They also began the process to get guardianship of all four, but they had no plans at that point to adopt. They were sheltering and nurturing the kids until Scott and Beth were able to be parents.

Even so, it was a tense 30 days until guardianship was awarded, because they were nervous Scott and Beth might change their minds.

"Because legally, we didn't have a leg to stand on if my son and his wife came back to get them," Jeri said.

She said they were naive in thinking that losing a child would inspire Scott and Beth to change.

Hopes raised

For a while, it looked as though they might. Beth got "pretty clean," filed for visitation rights and was put on a visitation schedule. That went well at first, Jeri said, until the kids were allowed to visit Beth's house in Indiana. They started to have behavior problems.

In 2004, Beth got pregnant again. She stopped seeing the four kids when she was about six months pregnant with child No. 5, Chris.

By that time, it was clear to the Thyngs that Beth and Scott would never pull it together. But they found themselves in legal limbo: for the four children to be free for adoption, their parents had to be declared unfit.

The Michigan courts would declare Scott and Beth unfit if the state of Georgia did "but Georgia never did. They had closed the case on Randy, child No. 4, a single step prior to declaring the parents unfit.

In June 2005, the kids' nearly six-year placement with the Thyngs took a turn toward permanency when Beth called at 3 a.m. to say the state of Georgia would be taking 16-month-old Chris.

"Will you come get him?" she asked.

Jeri told her, "Yes, but social services will be involved this time."

Path to adoption opens

"It's because of the fifth one that we were able to adopt them," Jeri said. "We think Chris was our little helper, because we had the right people guiding us."

Because of the way they got Chris "in an emergency situation, living in a pickup truck or a tent on the side of the road" the door opened for the other four to be adopted.

In addition, Thyngs discovered the range of medical and psychological services and assistance that had been available for the other four "if they had only known.

"It was a rough year," Jeri said. "But it's been a year of learning more."

Only a couple of weeks after they got Chris, the Thyngs had heard Beth was pregnant again. They didn't intend to take that baby.

When Scott and Beth moved to Coldwater, Michael and Jeri asked their St. Joseph County adoption worker some questions.

"What do we do? How do we let them (Branch County authorities) know there (will be) a baby over there at risk?"

In March 2006, the Thyngs got a phone call: a little girl was born this morning in Coldwater â€” do you want her? If not, sheâ€™s going to another family member.

Despite their earlier intentions not to take that baby, there was no decision to be made.

"We both agreed we couldnâ€™t let another child be ruined," Jeri said.

Michael had planned a party to celebrate Jeriâ€™s 50th birthday. They turned her party into a baby shower.

They also started proceedings to terminate the parental rights for baby Katie. A month before the process was due to end, Beth and Scott signed off. Katie was free for adoption.

In addition, the legal red tape holding Stephanie, Brandon, Kaylee, Randy and Chris was finally untangled; their adoption was finalized Sept. 26.

Katieâ€™s adoption will be finalized today, during the "Adoption Day" celebration at St. Joseph County Probate Court.

A fresh start, with scars

The kids now have a chance in life, but they also have a lot of ground to make up.

"We were very naive when we got the kids," Jeri said. "We thought that love and security would be enough. We didnâ€™t understand the trauma the kids had been through."

"They did things we thought were from being poorly raised" â€” a boy urinating on his sisterâ€™s dolls or the kids smearing feces on the wall. "We thought we just had to teach them and didnâ€™t realize it had to do with the things that they had lost (nurturing)," Jeri said.

The price has been high emotionally for Michael and Jeri as well.

The hardest part for her, at first, was "the disappointment in my child (Scott). I have no communication with my son, but the kids are my priority. Heâ€™s an adult, heâ€™s made his choices in life," she said.

Thereâ€™s also the impact on her relationship with Michael.

"Michael and I losing our time together," Jeri said. "We were just at the point where we could do things (their two younger sons were 13 and 16) then we got the first four grandkids," she said. "Weâ€™re not going to have a normal retirement."

Michael shares her frustration. "I tell her Iâ€™m not going to retire until I die â€” Iâ€™ve got too many kids," he said.

Yet what else could they have done, she asked.

"In our situation, they (kids) are family, but everybody goes, â€”how could you do this? â€” I said, â€”how could we not at that point?â€” Then we ask: â€”how could we turn our back on them? What kind of people would we be?â€”" Jeri said.

She knows the kind of person her husband is.

"The most amazing thing through all this has been him," she said. "He didnâ€™t have to

take them in, he didn't have to treat them like they were his own."

And there are signs of hope with the children.

Brandon was featured in the newspaper for the DARE essay he wrote about his own experience of losing parents to drugs. The positive attention was a great thing for him, Jeri said.

It's been difficult for Stephanie, and her behavior has concerned the Thyngs.

The counselor told Jeri, "(Stephanie) is going to test you, to see if (she's) really bad, will you give (her) away?"

So Jeri started telling her, "Stephanie, no matter what you do, I'm going to love you."

She wasn't sure if her daughter "got" the unconditional love message.

Then she had the chance to read what Stephanie wrote to her younger brother, with whom she doesn't usually get along: "No matter what you do, I'm going to love you."

She got it.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### **Giving thanks for adoptive families**

Tuesday, November 21, 2006

Six thousand children in Michigan are in foster care, waiting, hoping and praying that someone will adopt them.

In Kalamazoo County alone, 140 children are eligible for adoption and waiting for a permanent family.

Today, two days before Thanksgiving, the Family Division of the Kalamazoo County Circuit Court is giving more than 20 children and the adults who want to be their parents something to be truly thankful for. On the fourth annual Michigan Adoption Day, these children and adults are having their adoptions confirmed in open court.

While many would-be parents are traveling abroad to adopt children in other countries, there are plenty of children here who await someone to adopt them.

Often, the children are older, or are racial minorities or have physical or mental disabilities. Sometimes they are part of a group of siblings who hope to be adopted together.

Still, we know there are permanent homes for many of these children. Last year, more than 2,800 children with special needs were adopted.

This Thanksgiving, as readers gather around their tables with their families and loved ones, several newly formed families will be giving thanks for the adoptions that have enlarged their circles.

But let us also remember those thousands of children who are still waiting in foster homes for adults whom they can call mom and dad.

They'd like to have something to be thankful for, too.

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## Breaking the stereotype of homelessness

By Jil Schult, Journalism Intern

OTSEGO COUNTY - When we think of homelessness, many of us imagine the guy pushing a shopping cart filled with all of his worldly possessions.

His fingerless gloves cover his dirty hands and he has not bathed or brushed his hair or teeth in weeks, maybe months. We see him sleeping on a cardboard box in a doorway or park bench, warming himself near a communal fire barrel, wide-eyed and lost.

And we fear him ...

Meet Bob Colpaert.

He says he has bachelor's degree in business administration and once held a job at General Motors North American Truck Platform in Pontiac as a cost estimator - earning nearly \$80,000 per year. At 56, he is a grandfather of two, who loves and misses his grandchildren terribly. He's clean, friendly and polite.

And he's homeless.

His presence is anything but fearful.

But the numbers are disheartening. Today (Saturday) marks the end of Homeless Awareness Week, but homelessness is an ongoing issue.

According to Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness, a survey conducted from January to June 2006, showed 50,692 people are homeless in the state. Another 8,563 adults and children are at risk of homelessness.

With part of a \$10,000 state grant to write a 10-year plan to end homelessness, Otsego County is one of the 60 communities to participate in the plan writing.

Phil Alexander, Otsego County MSU Extension director, facilitated the five-month planning process, which came with a mid-October deadline of completion.

The planning was a joint effort.

"We brought in two focus groups of community leaders and two focus groups at the homeless shelter," said Alexander, who shared a draft copy of the plan for the groups to review and give input.

With input from a 10-person advisory board, the plan was completed with a written vision: "All people in Otsego County will be in safe, affordable, permanent homes."

Peter Amar, Otsego Human Service Network Coordinator, is a member of the advisory board.

"The network is a coalition of many of the local public agencies," Amar said.

According to Amar, the state of Michigan's plan clearly addresses homeless issues.

Utilizing the multiple agencies in the community, the advisory board is ready to move toward implementation of the plan, which defines roles for all agencies involved.

"There have been several different interagency efforts that have looked at housing and homelessness issues," Amar said.

The plan will help realign some of those efforts, to fill in the cracks and omit overlapping services.

Rhonda Berdan knows homelessness on a daily basis.

As the Friendship Shelter director, Berdan and the advisory board will work to fix the system.

"Housing is the first approach," Berdan said. "And getting into housing fast."



If the 10-year plan is successful, Berdan could be working herself out of a job.

"If I had to find another job because there is no homelessness in the state of Michigan," she said, "I think I'm fine with that."

Other concerns, according to Berdan, are substance abuse and mental health issues.

Colpaert, a lifelong alcoholic, was warned by GM supervisors that his job would be over if he went to jail.

In 2002, during a 98-day period, Colpaert received four drunk driving citations.

"It basically turned my life upside down," he said.

Though Colpaert has been sober for more than 400 days, he spent 5 1/2 months in jail on a one-year sentence for the drunk driving offenses.

He moved to Lewiston and stayed at his daughter and son-in-law's house, working odd jobs, when he was caught driving with an invalid license, followed by a drunk and disorderly charge.

He served a year in jail.

When he was released in August, Colpaert stayed with friends awhile.

"You can only stay with friends so long," he said.

He went to the Friendship Shelter in Gaylord in early October.

He is going to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) since 1993.

"I would get sober and start drinking again."

Colpaert attends AA meetings and is totally committed to his program, he said.

"This Gaylord AA group is the best I've been to," Colpaert said. "They're just outstanding."

The Friendship Shelter is a stepping stone for Colpaert. He will be receiving his GM retirement soon and will move closer to his grandchildren in Lewiston, with whom he talks to on the telephone.

According to Friendship Shelter statistics, Colpaert has a good chance of not returning.

That's because the shelter has seen a drop in return clients. In 2000 there were 36 return clients searching for shelter and nine returns in 2005 - a 75 percent reduction.

"I totally believe in my heart that (reduction) is because of the program we have here," Berdan said of the 90-day maximum stay shelter.

"The education and the knowledgeable staff working with clients on a daily basis making sure all of their needs are met before they leave," is a factor.

The shelter emphasizes life skills education.

But, Berdan adds, "We are still seeing a great number of people coming through the shelter."

In 2005, the Friendship Shelter housed 349 people. This year through October the shelter has served approximately 300 people.

### **50,692 people homeless in Michigan**

According to Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness, Baseline Data Report, 60 communities involved in the 10-year plan to end homelessness across the state. The following are statistics gathered from January through June 2006 regarding homelessness in the state:

- 50,692 people are homeless

- 59 percent are single female head-of-household families
- 56 percent of homeless persons in families are children; most under the age of 10
- 36 percent have incomes less than \$500 per month, average family income \$800 per month
- 44 percent have experienced homelessness more than once; 19 percent reported a disability
- 66 percent are men; primarily in their 40s and 50s
- 41 percent have no income
- 18 percent are employed
- 15 percent receive SSI; many more qualify but do not claim this benefit
- 14 percent of chronically homeless individuals are veterans
- 8,563 adults and children are at risk of homelessness

**10-year plan to end homelessness advisory board**

- Peter Amar, Otsego Human Service Network Coordinator
- Rhonda Berdan, Friendship Shelter Director (Otsego County Housing and Homeless Coalition Coordinator)
- Julie F. Delaney, Attorney/Referee - 46th Circuit Trial Court Family Division Supervisor
- Joe Hebel, Program Support Services Director - North Country Community Mental Health
- Ken Homa, Director of Housing Services, Goodwill Industries, Inc.
- Jonathan Mays, Otsego County Ministerial Association
- Cynthia Pushman, Director, Otsego - Crawford Department of Human Services (Otsego County Homeless Coalition Chair)
- Barbara Soffredine, Otsego Human Service Network Chair
- Laura Weiss, Business Liaison, Michigan Works! (Otsego Human Service Network Vice-Chair)
- Alice Yoeman, Northern Homes Community Development Corporation (Otsego County Affordable Housing Alliance Chair)

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AP News: General News

## **Federal judge rejects Las Vegas ban on feeding homeless in parks**

By KEN RITTER

Associated Press Writer

November 21, 2006

LAS VEGAS (AP) - A federal judge on Monday rejected the city's ban on feeding poor or homeless people in city parks.

Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman had argued that handouts discourage homeless people from seeking help from social service providers set up to handle mental health and substance abuse problems. Neighbors had complained of large numbers of homeless people congregating at downtown parks, drawn by groups providing meals.

But U.S. District Court Judge Robert Jones issued an injunction prohibiting enforcement of the ordinance, passed in July, and told lawyers for the city and the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada that he intends to issue an order killing the measure. No date was set for final action.

'The judge said you can't just ban providing food to people who look poor,' said Lee Rowland, the ACLU lawyer who argued the case. She said the key fault in the city ordinance was that it made distinctions among people based on their appearance.

Las Vegas officials vowed to rewrite the law so it would pass constitutional muster.

'The main thing is to make sure these people get professional care,' Goodman said of homeless and indigent people, who he added 'deserve to be in service centers and with faith-based groups.'

'I know I'm right on this one,' the mayor said. 'We just have to get the law in shape.'

Since the ordinance took effect, several summonses have been handed out by city marshals at parks in the downtown area, several miles from the Las Vegas Strip.

One municipal court judge tossed out a misdemeanor case against a California activist last month and called the ordinance unconstitutionally vague. That judge said the measure denied equal protection of the law to all citizens.



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Published November 21, 2006

## Old Town effort feeds 95 mid-Mich. families

Fixings give dad, mom, kids chance to cook up a feast Boxes offer a ready-to-prepare Thanksgiving meal

By Kathleen Lavey  
Lansing State Journal

The air inside the Temple Club was frigid Monday, but spirits were warm.

Fifty volunteers spent the morning at the shuttered nightclub, packing 95 boxes with turkey, potatoes, stuffing, and ingredients for green bean casserole and pumpkin pie as part of the Old Town Commercial Association's Compassionate Feast.

Families began picking up the boxes about noon.

"I'm thankful that we're getting help," said Jonie Eckhart of DeWitt Township, loading a box with a turkey dinner tailored to her family of five into a Chevy Blazer. "My husband fell off a ladder, and he's not able to work right now."

As families lined up to collect their boxes, Jamie Schriner-Hooper, executive director of the Old Town Commercial Association, slipped in the door carrying a stack of pizzas for afternoon volunteers.

"Of all the events that we do, I think this is my favorite," she said. "Every year, we get a little quicker and things go a little smoother."

**Outreach in its 6th year**



(Photo by BECKY SHINK/Lansing State Journal)

Compassionate Feast: Volunteers Amber McLean (left) and Marquel Price carry food out of the Temple Club for the Compassionate Feast. The Old Town effort provides all the ingredients for Thanksgiving dinner and will serve about 95 families this year.

### 95

boxes of food distributed Monday by the Old Town Commercial Association's Compassionate Feast

500

pounds of potatoes donated by the Olympic Broil restaurant

50

volunteers who packed boxes Monday morning

\$6,000

budget for this year's event

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Now in its sixth year, the event was conceived by David Such, owner of Such Video, an Old Town-based video production company. He was involved in a leadership program and got an assignment to create a community project from scratch.

So he decided to give needy families the means to create their own Thanksgiving meals from scratch. The first feast distributed about 50 dinners.

Compassionate Feast boxes this year included everything from turkey to Jell-O and canned pumpkin to disposable shakers filled with salt and pepper. Each box of food also came with simple instructions for creating the meal.

Such was on location working Monday but couldn't pack boxes himself. He's glad others did.

"I'm really touched, moved and inspired that it has lasted as long as it has," Such said.

#### **Donated items help**

Schriner-Hooper was among the group who shopped for the feast over the weekend. The Old Town Commercial Association had raised about \$6,000 to cover the cost of groceries. Some food, including cartons of Cool Whip and 500 pounds of potatoes, were donated.

The Meijer store on West Saginaw Highway covered the cost of turkeys. As for other groceries, "they gave us every possible discount they could," Schriner-Hooper said. "I got a little choked up last night at Meijer when I saw the bill," she said.

The total: \$4,600, leaving \$1,400 in the bank for next year's feast.

Contact Kathleen Lavey at 377-1251 or [klavey@lsj.com](mailto:klavey@lsj.com).

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## Churches offer free dinners

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, November 21, 2006

By George Jaksa

[gjaksa@flintjournal.com](mailto:gjaksa@flintjournal.com) • 810.766.6332

FLINT - Eight Genesee County Churches of God are offering a free Thanksgiving dinners from 4-7:30 p.m. Wednesday at McKinley Middle School, 4501 Camden Ave. Music will be provided by Hands in Praise of Kingston, Jamaica.

Participating churches are Community Hope, Holbrook Avenue, New Creation, Calvert Park, Hilltop, Living Word, West Court Street and German Church of God.

- George Jaksa

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **The Detroit News**  
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November 21, 2006

## Overloaded system endangers foster kids

Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News

Michigan's growing foster care caseload, lack of foster families and cuts to abuse prevention programs have prompted critics to charge that the system that oversees the care of nearly 19,000 neglected and abused children is stressed and flawed.

That system has come under scrutiny in recent months following the deaths of two toddlers. While it is still unclear if the state could have prevented those deaths, some observers say insufficient staffing and oversight could jeopardize more children's safety.

"With all the budget cuts, we have less workers doing more work," said Jeanne Fowler, head of the child advocacy group called Big Family of Michigan.

"There are fewer social workers, and more children coming into the foster system. A lot of the therapy has been eliminated and other services. They have been removed from a place that they deemed harmful and then the state has put them in a home where they are harmed more."

State officials deny that contention, and say that despite the recent deaths, children in the system are generally safe.

But Fowler says people are "not making enough noise to make the state of Michigan responsible for these children."

"A child doesn't suffer just on the day he dies," Fowler said.

"This abuse takes a long time. The child dies a little bit each day and nobody notices until he's gone."

### Growing number of children

The number of children in Michigan's foster care system has grown 31 percent in two decades, from 14,113 children in 1987 to 18,440 today. But the number of Michigan families that temporarily care for these children has not kept pace, which some critics say can leave foster children in homes that do not meet their needs. The state has 13 licensing consultants who directly oversee nearly 500 agencies, including 241 private and public agencies that place children in foster care.

Over the past two years, the number of foster care workers declined -- from 812 in 2004 to 725 today. Those workers, who are the foster care children's primary contacts, have caseloads ranging from 17 to 24 children, well over the 12 to 15 caseload standard recommended by the Child Welfare League of America, an advocacy group. Despite the recent deaths in some foster homes, Michigan children in foster care are safe, said Jim Nye, deputy director of field operations of the state Department of Human Services. "We are expanding placement options by looking at (extended) families," Nye said. "Before, you might have only looked at licensed foster homes but by looking to relatives first, you have probably quadrupled the number of placements. It's not a finite number of placements as it once was."

Workers' caseloads went up, in part, when some foster care workers were assigned to only investigate complaints of abuse and neglect or assigned to work on initiatives aimed at placing foster children into relatives' homes, instead of traditional foster homes.

When workers' caseloads increase, the number of face-to-face meetings they can conduct with foster children goes down, said Millicent Williams of the Child Welfare League of America.

"If you don't see the child, you are guessing. You are taking other people's word on how the child is doing," Williams said.

### Foster care funding cut

Meanwhile, funding for state programs aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect have been cut over the past five years, impacting services to thousands of children, according to Michigan's Children, an advocacy group.

For example, the budget for Families First, a program that provides parenting classes and home management skills to families at risk of having children removed, was cut 17 percent. As a result more than 1,000 families weren't able to get support, Michigan's Children said. Child advocates are pleased that the state Department of Human Services has permission to use federal dollars for other prevention services that would help families avoid foster care for their children. Until now, federal dollars have been used primarily to support the foster system, not help kids stay out. But advocates say the trend in cutting prevention programs has hurt the state's most vulnerable children.

"What really we need to do is invest in prevention programs," said Pat Sorenson, of Michigan's Children, "so kids aren't put in foster care in the first place and we don't overburden that system."

### 103 foster kids died since '02

Between January 2002 and September 2006, 103 children died while in foster care though the state only attributes four of those to abuse or neglect. Most of the deaths were because of accidents, suicide or natural causes, such as meningitis or severe seizures, state officials said.

Isaac Lethbridge, 2, who was in a Detroit foster home, and Allison Newman, also 2, who was living in Canton Township, died in the homes that were meant to be safe havens.

A 12-year-old girl recently testified in court that she accidentally caused Isaac's death by trying to throw him onto a mattress. Instead, he missed and hit the floor.

Prosecutors charged Carol Poole, Allison Newman's foster mother, with felony murder, involuntary manslaughter and first-degree child



abuse.

In high-profile deaths, the state scrutinizes the case files to see if department procedures were followed. They also interview everyone responsible for the child's welfare. In some cases, they find state workers did all they could. When the department finds that an agency did not follow all procedures, the local office works to correct the action.

### **More checks are being done**

The most common finding is that steps were missed, said Steve Yager, director of the Office of Family Advocate in the Department of Human Services. The state is still investigating the cases of Isaac and Allison and would not release details.

"Any time a child dies, it is a horrific event," Yager said. "It is a tragedy that is beyond comprehension. My office is working to strengthen practice in every possible way."

The state is conducting more background checks on relatives and doubling the training required for foster families, in addition to placing more foster children in the homes of relatives.

Some advocates say the efforts are not enough. "Kids entering the system are not getting the services or the protection they need," said Marcia Lowry, head of Children's Rights, a New York-based watchdog organization that recently filed a lawsuit against Michigan. The lawsuit seeks reform and both sides are attempting to settle the case.

Until then, parents such as Burujah Ismail are wary about the system. During her weekly visit with her daughter in foster care, she recently saw scrapes and bruises and little bumps on her daughter's head.

"I am really worried about her," Ismail said.

*You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or [kkozlowski@detnews.com](mailto:kkozlowski@detnews.com).*

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Funding cut presents local Head Start with challenges

Tuesday, November 21, 2006

**cricks@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8557**

Three-year-old Lucas Pineda knows his alphabet.

He also is learning to socialize with other children, said Nichole Pineda, his mother.

Lucas has been coming to Kalamazoo County's Head Start program at Edison Environmental Science Academy since September.

"Head Start is wonderful," Nichole Pineda said. "He loves it when he is here."

Lucas is one of 626 children in Kalamazoo County Head Start, a federally funded program that has been in existence locally for about 30 years and provides school readiness for children from low-income families.

Preschoolers 2 1/2 to 5 years old come to the program four days a week. Traditionally, the program has been offered five days per week, but rising operational costs and a reduction in federal funding has led to fewer days of service.

That means there is less educational time for children to develop the skills they need to prepare them for school, said Marti Perry, program manager of Kalamazoo County Head Start.

Parents who send their children to Head Start also have had to find alternative child-care options because of the reduction in days of service, Perry said.

Head Start operates September through the end of May.

In recent years, Head Start's funding has remained relatively flat, but for the 2005-06 school year the program received a 1 percent reduction. That reduction has remained in effect for the current school year as well, Perry said.

"It's just like your home budget. If you don't get a raise and the cost of gasoline, food and everything else goes up, something has got to give," Perry said.

"I know 1 percent doesn't sound like a lot, but after not getting an increase for three years and then to take a cut and for the 2006-07 year that cut was kept in place, it does affect us," Perry said.

Lucas' Head Start teacher, Ann Green, has up to 15 students in both her morning and afternoon classes.

She leads a half-day of activities such as exercises with letters and numbers, games, songs and stories, and art or creative play.

Breakfast, lunch and snacks are provided for Head Start students.

"This is their first impression of school," said Tina Fry, a teacher's aide with Head Start for nearly 20 years. "The first impression is a lasting impression."

Fry said the biggest benefit of Head Start is teaching preschoolers socialization skills that will help them make a smooth transition into elementary school.

“If they come into the school system happy, their minds are open for learning,” Fry said. “If they come in frightened of their surroundings, they won’t produce well.”

“We want to make them comfortable,” she said.

Head Start officials examine the social, emotional, cognitive, physical and language development of preschoolers who come through the program.

Kalamazoo County's Head Start program has 72 classroom staff and 28 administrative staff, Perry said.

Three administrative positions have been cut and hours for classroom staff have been reduced from 40 hours to about 36 hours per week as a result of budget constraints, Perry said.

Head Start is typically seen as a preschool program, but it offers services to entire families. Each family with a child in the program is assigned a caseworker, Perry said.

The caseworker meets with the family periodically, helps the family establish goals, and connects the family with resources in the community.

“We try to look at the whole family unit. What are their goals and what are their needs?” Perry said. “We try to look at the total child not just the classroom school readiness, but also the health, nutrition and mental health.”

“I think most people when they think of Head Start they think of the classroom. That’s very important, but there are also other aspects of Head Start too.”

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Article published Nov 21, 2006  
Boy, 16, sentenced to life for murder  
Brother's trial starts Nov. 28 in Ira slaying

By CRAIG DAVISON  
Times Herald

A 16-year-old New Baltimore boy was sentenced Monday to life in prison without parole for his role in the May 31 beating and stabbing death of a 43-year-old Casco Township woman.

St. Clair County Circuit Judge James Adair gave Raymond Carp the sentence despite arguments from his lawyer the punishment was too harsh for Carp's involvement in Maryann McNeely's death.

A jury found Carp guilty Oct. 5 of first-degree murder, armed robbery and two counts of larceny. First-degree murder carries a mandatory life prison sentence in Michigan.

"I think it is inherently unjust," Carp's lawyer Daniel Garron said during the hearing. "I think it is inherently unfair."

In interviews with Michigan State Police after the slaying, Carp admitted to throwing a glass mug at McNeely during a struggle between her and Brandon Gorecki, 22, of New Baltimore. Gorecki is Carp's brother.

Carp declined to make a statement to the court. Garron said he plans to appeal the case.

Senior Assistant Prosecutor Mona Armstrong told the court Carp should be held responsible for his role in McNeely's death.

"(Carp) has never in any way, shape or form accepted responsibility for his role (in McNeely's death)," Armstrong said in court. "The court knows how violent and how brutal this murder was."

Carp's friends and family sat silent in the courtroom as the sentence was read. Many had tears on their faces after the sentencing.

A jury trial is expected to begin Nov. 28 for Gorecki, who faces charges nearly identical to his brother's.

Gorecki testified for his brother as a defense witness, telling jurors he was the one who beat and stabbed McNeely, stole her pickup truck, drove it to Detroit and burned it.

McNeely's husband, John McNeely, addressed the court Monday.

"I just wish this state carried capital punishment," he said.

Adair said Carp had "sufficient mental faculties" to make the right decision the night of McNeely's death and did not take opportunities to escape, leave or assist McNeely.

"This is probably the most horrific case I've ever been involved with in my entire career," Adair said. "The unfortunate conclusion is that the victim is dead."

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Parental Responsibility Ordinance Gets Approved

### *Ticket Rule In Royal Oak To Start Nov. 30*

POSTED: 8:38 am EST November 21, 2006

UPDATED: 12:01 pm EST November 21, 2006

A new Parental Responsibility ordinance was approved Monday night in Royal Oak.

The Royal Oak city commission unanimously approved the measure.

The ordinance makes it a civil infraction for parents who are found to have failed to prevent their children, up to age 17, from doing something wrong.

Other suburbs such as, Southfield, St. Clair Shores, and Redford Township also have similar ordinances.

It could include anything from skipping school to being out past curfew.

Curfew for children 16 and younger is 10:30 p.m. to 5 a.m.

The fines start at \$100.00 for the first offense and could go up to \$500.00.

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Michigan Report

November 20, 2006

## **LEGISLATORS STILL PRESSING WELFARE REFORMS**

While Governor Jennifer Granholm on Tuesday will outline her legislative priorities during lame duck, a Republican lawmaker says he's cautiously optimistic welfare reforms will be part of the House and Senate's agenda as the 93<sup>rd</sup> Legislature winds down.

[Rep. Jerry Kooiman](#) (R-Grand Rapids), one of the leading legislators on the issue, said Monday that House [Speaker Craig DeRoche](#) (R-Novi) and Senate [Majority Leader Ken Sikkema](#) (R-Wyoming) have indicated they would like to tackle further reforms to the cash assistance program, however, exactly what those reforms will consist of are still on the table.

House Republicans have introduced [HB 6578](#), [HB 6579](#), [HB 6580](#), [HB 6581](#), [HB 6582](#), [HB 6583](#), [HB 6584](#), [HB 6585](#) and [HB 6586](#), which are mainly reflective of past proposals to limit benefits to 48 months for able-bodied adults and provide sanctions to recipients who don't meet Work First requirements. Mr. Kooiman said those bills are vehicle bills for discussion and that he doesn't want to simply see the current form of the Michigan Work First Program extended as is.

"I hope we don't just punt and extend the sunset," he said. The sunset is scheduled for December 31.

Mr. Kooiman said he would like to see the Jobs, Education and Training program (JET) have a timetable for statewide roll out, as well as establishment of a better assessment of individuals receiving assistance.

Ms. Granholm has said she would support a 48-month time limit on benefits for able-bodied adults not facing barriers to work; exemptions that Mr. Kooiman said would be discussed further. Republicans are not going to send her the same proposals she's vetoed in the past, he said.

He also said that it's possible the lifetime limit could roll out at a later date, or in a way that everyone receiving assistance now would be able to have the full four-year time table to move into the workforce or onto the federal supplemental security income.

Mr. Kooiman acknowledged the tight time frame required to get the bills through negotiations in both chambers, but said that he has had talks with [Rep. Chris Kolb](#) (D-Ann Arbor) who has taken the lead on the issue for House Democrats, and also plans to sit down with [Sen. Bill Hardiman](#) (R-Kentwood).

## Charity brings joy to families



**Clare Dutton, left, and Becky Vaughan collect donations for the Christmas Committee at the Save-a-lot store in Manistique recently. The committee has been helping make Christmas brighter for needy families since the 1970s. (Daily Press photo by Robb Lucas)**

By Robb Lucas - [news@dailypress.net](mailto:news@dailypress.net)

MANISTIQUE — Its business name, as an IRS-designated charitable organization, is now the Schoolcraft County Community Giving Christmas Program. Locally, however, since the 1970s, this group of volunteers is known simply as the Christmas Committee and their "business" is bringing joy to children and families who might not otherwise have the means to celebrate Christmas this year.

The new name and tax status of the Christmas Committee, said organizer Margaret Cain, is a reflection of its expansion and success. Originally, in addition to collecting new and used gifts, the 1970s committee volunteers put up "mitten trees" in businesses and churches around Schoolcraft County.

"The idea was to collect knitted mittens and hang them on tinsel," Cain said, "for cold winter hands."

This year, mitten trees are on display in The People's Store and the Wells Fargo Bank accepting mittens, gloves, scarfs, hats and whole range of cold weather articles.

Likewise, today's Christmas Committee program is bigger and broader, comprised of three separate entities. The Gift Tag Campaign connects specific needy children (and adults) to individual Christmas donors in complete anonymity. The children of qualifying families, as determined by the local Department of Human Services, are asked to fill out their Christmas wish "tags." The tags are then hung like ornaments from Christmas trees or put on display on tables inside participating stores, banks, churches and businesses.

"Tag's are given numbers to protect identities, two tags per child," Cain said. The tags include the age of the child, gender, clothing sizes, and a description of the gift desired.

"As you can imagine, we get requests that range from the barest necessities to the most expensive and exotic," Cain said. Donors then select a tag, purchase and wrap the request gift, and return it to the Committee.

"We're asking that all gifts and tags be returned by Dec. 4, which will give us time to organize distribution," she said.

Simultaneously, the committee is running its annual Food Voucher program. Weekends, volunteers sit at tables inside the Pamida Store, Sav-a-Lot, and Jack's Super Valu store, collecting cash to distribute as vouchers to buy Christmas dinners. "Vouchers can be used only for food," Cain said,

"not tobacco or alcohol." In years past, Cain said, vouchers of \$25 and \$35 have been distributed.

"The money we collect all stays here in Schoolcraft County," said committee member Clare Dutton in the Sav-a-Lot store.

In 2004, the committee collected \$7,328 for food vouchers and distributed 669 gifts to children and adults.

The newest Christmas Committee program is called "Adopt A Family." Seven needy Schoolcraft families have submitted applications to the Department of Human Services to be matched up with seven sponsors who will play Santa Claus to the entire family. "We hope this program grows," Cain said. "The idea was to have a program where each child in a family would be treated equally."

Gifts collected by the Christmas Committee will be distributed to families on Dec. 14 at the Hiawatha Community Center, Cain said.

"When all the gifts are assembled, you would not believe how many there are, how impressive they look. And the giving is all done very discretely, the recipients don't even have to leave their cars," she said.

"The true Christmas Committee is our whole community," Cain said. "The volunteers do the work, coordinate the programs, but it is the people of Schoolcraft County who bring so much happiness to neighbors in need. They do it every year."

The Christmas Committee also accepts donations through direct mail. Checks may be sent to the Manistique Ministerial Association, marked "Christmas Committee," at 315 Walnut St., Manistique, 49854.



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November 21, 2006

**Edna P. Miller, Waterford**

## Retiree pioneered Wayne State's social welfare program

**Oralandar Brand-Williams / The Detroit News**

Edna P. Miller, a pioneering associate professor at Wayne State University's School of Social Work, loved WSU because it created opportunities for people.

Mrs. Miller, an associate professor emeritus, was one of WSU's first tenured female faculty members. She authored the Social Welfare Policy Program for the School of Social Work. The program has been in effect at the university for the past 20 years.

Mrs. Miller died of complications of lung cancer Saturday, Nov. 18, 2006, in her Waterford residence. She was 80.

Mrs. Miller retired in 1987. "She really loved Wayne State because it really helped create opportunities for people who otherwise would not have had them," said her son, Powell Miller.

Before joining Wayne State, she worked at the former Lafayette Clinic on Detroit's east side in programs for mentally ill children. She also was a former appointee of former Michigan Gov. William Milliken on a committee that amended the state's Mental Health Code.

Born in York, England, Mrs. Miller came to the United States via Windsor in the 1950s. She received a master's degree in social work from Wayne State in 1958. She got her undergraduate degree at the University of Leeds.

She was a lifetime member of the NAACP.

Survivors are a son, Powell; two daughters, Ann Lydia Miller and Elizabeth Dot Miller; Bruce Miller; and three grandchildren.

Visitation will be from 2-9 p.m. today at A.J. Desmond & Sons Funeral Homes, 32515 Woodward in Royal Oak. The funeral will be 11 a.m. Wednesday at Christ Church Cranbrook, 470 Church Road in Bloomfield Hills. Burial will be in Mount Elliott Cemetery in Rochester.

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